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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KITTIKHOUN (Lao People's Democratic Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

1. The CHAIRMAN said that some of the items on the Committee's agenda had been under consideration for a long time and deserved to be addressed in earnest so that the problems in question could be resolved as rapidly as possible. In the case of the item entitled "The situation in the occupied territories of Croatia", he hoped that the parties concerned would be patient and endeavour to find a solution acceptable to all.

2. In order to achieve progress, all delegations, and first and foremost the parties directly concerned, must show a spirit of mutual understanding and must be cooperative and flexible so as to be able to progress in the right direction.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

3. Mr. HOLOHAN (Ireland) nominated Ms. Carayanides (Australia) and Mr. SAMADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) nominated Mrs. Leonce-Carryl (Saint Lucia) for the two offices of Vice-Chairman.

4. Ms. Carayanides (Australia) and Mrs. Leonce-Carryl (Saint Lucia) were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/C.4/51/1; A/C.4/51/L.1)

5. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had before it a letter dated 20 September 1996 from the President of the General Assembly containing the list of agenda items allocated to it for consideration (A/C.4/51/1) and a note by the Chairman prepared in accordance with the related decisions and practices of the General Assembly (A/C.4/51/L.1). He drew attention to the recommendations concerning the organization and rationalization of the work and practices of the General Assembly contained in the report of the General Committee (A/51/250) and to the decisions taken by the General Assembly regarding the closing date of the session, the schedule of meetings, explanations of vote, rights of reply and points of order.

6. On the question of the length of statements during general debates, he suggested that the time limit should be set at 10 minutes, with the exception of statements made by spokesmen for groups of delegations, for which the time limit should be 15 minutes.

7. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) suggested that statements by petitioners should be subject to the same time limits.

8. Mr. KATTI (Algeria) said that the time limits should be applied only to Member States. Petitioners, who appeared only once during the session, should be allotted the time they needed to speak to the Committee.

9. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that States were limited to one statement on each item in the general debate; moreover, some petitioners had already made statements in the Special Committee on decolonization. They should be subject to the same time limits.

10. Mr. COHEN (Netherlands) said that not all members of the Committee were also members of the Special Committee on decolonization.

11. Mr. HOLOHAN (Ireland) said that the Committee was in no position to decide whether individual petitioners should be limited to a particular time; the matter could be decided only by the Bureau, on a case-by-case basis.

12. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, in line with the practice in the Special Committee on decolonization, the time limit for statements by petitioners should be 15 minutes.

13. It was so decided.

14. The CHAIRMAN said that, with regard to records of meetings, the General Assembly had approved the recommendation of the General Committee to maintain the practice whereby the Fourth Committee received summary records but could obtain, on specific request, transcripts of the debates of some of its meetings or portions thereof. He drew members' attention to the recommendations contained in the report of the General Committee (A/51/250) regarding the conduct of the session, the submission of draft resolutions and the control and limitation of documentation. He had also circulated to members an aide-mémoire from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences concerning improved utilization of conference-servicing resources which also spelled out the costs for meetings and documentation. Members were urged to keep those figures in mind.

15. Turning to the timetable in document A/C.4/51/L.1, he said that, on the basis of the number of meetings required for the consideration of its agenda in previous years, the Committee had been allocated 28 meetings at the current session. He had circulated an informal report on the status of the Committee's documentation.

16. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) inquired when the verbatim records for the 1996 session of the Special Committee on decolonization would be available and whether the informal report on the status of documentation would be made available in all the official languages.

17. It seemed to his delegation that the practice of conducting a general debate on decolonization questions in the Fourth Committee followed by a debate on those same questions in the plenary Assembly constituted a duplication of work, and he would welcome some information from the Secretariat on the origins of that practice. It might be possible to save both time and resources if the decolonization items were considered only in the plenary Assembly.

18. Mr. ABDUR-RAZZAQUE (Secretary of the Committee) said that the Special Committee was currently receiving summary records, not verbatim records. The unavailability of the summary records was undoubtedly due to the downsizing of

the translation services, which were finding it difficult to keep pace with the volume of work. The reports listed would be available well before the items were scheduled for consideration, however.

19. The practice of conducting a debate on decolonization items in both the Fourth Committee and the plenary Assembly dated from some 15 years earlier and had originated as a commemoration of an anniversary of the Special Committee.

20. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that the office of the Director of Conference Services had informed him that the production of documents depended on their date of submission. Since the workload was usually light during August and September, it was reasonable to expect the summary records of a session held in July to be available. If summary records could not be issued in a timely way, they were of use only as a historical record. He therefore proposed that the Fourth Committee should decide that the practice of preparing summary records for meetings of the Special Committee should be abolished.

21. He urged the Bureau to consider the validity of the practice of holding debates on decolonization items in both the Fourth Committee and the plenary Assembly.

22. Mr. KATTI (Algeria) said that, in accordance with past practice, the Bureau of the Committee should discuss the matter of the debate on decolonization items. The Special Committee on decolonization, as a sovereign body, should decide for itself whether it wished to continue receiving summary records of its meetings.

23. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that, while the Fourth Committee had the competence to decide on the matter of summary records for the Special Committee, he agreed with the representative of Algeria that the Special Committee should be asked to make a recommendation.

24. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should approve, in principle, the suggestions contained in document A/C.4/51/L.1.

25. It was so decided.

26. The CHAIRMAN noted that bodies and individuals having an interest in the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) (agenda item 49) would be heard in the Committee in conjunction with the consideration of the item in plenary meeting. The Committee would be informed if any requests were received on the item.

27. In connection with agenda item 83 he suggested that, as in previous years, the Committee should establish an open-ended working group chaired by the delegation of Austria to prepare a draft resolution on the item.

28. It was so decided.

29. The CHAIRMAN said that, by approving the suggested outline of work, the Committee had decided to hold a single general debate covering agenda items 19,

88, 89, 90 and 12 and 91, thereby enabling the members to speak on all those items or any one of them at meetings dealing with that cluster of items.

30. At previous sessions, the Fourth Committee, on the recommendation of the Special Committee on decolonization, had usually considered the chapter of the Special Committee's report relating to military activities in Non-Self-Governing Territories in conjunction with the item on foreign economic interests. He took it that the Committee wished to retain that procedure.

31. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 19: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (A/51/23 (Part V, chap. IX, Part VI, chap. X and Part VII, chap. X) and A/51/428; A/AC.109/2041 and Corr.1, 2043, 2044 and Add.1, 2045, 2046, 2047 and Add.1, 2050-2053, 2054 and Add.1, 2055-2057 and 2059; S/1996/43 and Corr.1, 343 and 674)

AGENDA ITEM 88: INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES TRANSMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS (A/51/23 (Part IV, chap. VIII) and A/51/316 and Add.1)

AGENDA ITEM 89: ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH IMPEDE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION (A/51/23 (Part III, chaps. V and VI))

AGENDA ITEM 90: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (A/51/23 (Part IV, chap. VII) and A/51/212; A/AC.109/L.1853; E/1996/85)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (A/51/3, chap. V, sect. A)

AGENDA ITEM 91: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (A/51/373)

32. Mr. AL-ATTAR (Syrian Arab Republic), Rapporteur of the Special Committee, introduced the chapters of the Special Committee's report covering its work during 1996 under agenda items 19, 88, 89 and 90 and contained in document A/51/23 (Parts II-VII).

33. The Special Committee's recommendations and proposals were contained in chapters IX to XII of document A/51/23 (Parts V to VIII). It was the responsibility of the administering Powers to create conditions under which the peoples of the Territories could exercise their right to self-determination. The administering Powers should also be requested to promote political education and economic and social development in the Territories, preserve their cultural identities and protect them from environmental degradation. United Nations specialized agencies and other bodies should be invited to dispatch visiting missions to the Territories to expedite progress in those areas and to perform

monitoring functions. It was regrettable that France, the United Kingdom and the United States, as administering Powers, had not participated in the Committee's work during the year. The chapters of the report of the Special Committee covering its work during 1996 concerning agenda items 89 and 90 appeared in document A/51/23 (Parts III and IV), chapters V to VII. Pursuant to paragraph 8 of General Assembly decision 50/412 of 6 December 1995, concerning military activities and arrangements by colonial Powers in Territories under their administration, the Special Committee's recommendation to the Assembly was contained in document A/51/23 (Part III), chapter VI.

34. Mr. SAMANA (Papua New Guinea), Acting Chairman of the Special Committee, reviewed the background and circumstances surrounding the preparation of the Special Committee's recommendations. The Committee had paid particular attention to the special needs of the Territories, notably with respect to their economic and social development. To that end, the cooperation of the administering Powers was highly desirable, and the specialized agencies of the United Nations were urged to extend all possible assistance. While much progress had been made, innovative and realistic solutions would be required if the world was to be free of colonialism by the year 2000.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

35. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that eight communications had been received containing requests for hearings on matters relating to Guam, New Caledonia and Western Sahara. He suggested that in accordance with the usual practice, they should be circulated as Committee documents and considered at the next meeting.

36. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) asked what justification there was for the hearing of petitions on Western Sahara.

37. Mr. ABDUR-RAZZAQUE (Secretary of the Committee) stated that as yet only the names of four petitioners were known; full information would be forthcoming when the requests were circulated as Committee documents. They were expected to be available by 11 October.

38. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that the Committee's regular practice had always been to circulate requests for hearings in advance. Proper procedure would thus appear to require that no petitioners would be heard at the next meeting of the Committee, scheduled as it was for 7 October.

39. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the documents would be available shortly; meanwhile, the Committee had already decided to consider requests for hearing at its next meeting and, subject to approval, to hear the petitioners themselves. He suggested that the Committee should follow that procedure.

40. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.